

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>923-925 5th Street NW</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>September 29, 2016</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>16-622</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Kim Elliott</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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The Peebles Corporation, working with WDG Architects, seeks conceptual design review of a 10-story residential building that incorporates the historic facade of 925 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Property Description**

Architect W. Ellis Groben designed 925-929 5<sup>th</sup> Street as a 2-story store in 1946 for the Union Provision and Distribution Company. It was designed as a Jewish meat market and distribution center with a refrigeration plant, and it changed its name to Director Company after the owner's surname. The front façade is all that remains of the original building which still has the original polychrome panels designed by J.J. Early. The panels once read "Director's Deli – Deliciously Different Corned Beef", some of which is still faintly visible today under a later coat of paint. The façade dates from the period of significance for the Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District (1869-1946), and HPO worked with the owner several years ago to ensure that the façade was properly braced so that it could be retained as part of this streetscape and incorporated into a new construction project.

### **Proposal**

The parti of the proposed design is a glass angular building sitting on a solid masonry base. The base would incorporate the historic façade, which would be stripped of paint and restored to showcase the polychrome panels, and two additional floors added atop in an industrial vocabulary of heavy brick piers with large industrial windows. The main mass of the building above would have an angular glass façade with projecting glass balconies and alternating angular setbacks. The existing plain 1-story brick wall at 923 5<sup>th</sup> Street would be demolished and the metal and glass architectural language would continue down to the street level with a large projecting canopy, serving as the main entrance into the residential building. The side elevations would be primarily metal panel with a metal and glass window wall system. An occupiable penthouse level would have a deck and pool area and mechanical rooms.

### **Evaluation**

The Mount Vernon Triangle Historic District is small and has a limited collection of historic buildings—many of which are sitting on sites zoned for much larger buildings—as is dramatically illustrated in this immediate context. The south corners of 5<sup>th</sup> and K Streets are the heart of the historic district, with the greatest concentration of early buildings. Retaining this collection relatively intact, and including in this case, a singular façade are important in giving the historic district scale and context.

Restoring and celebrating the façade of 925 5<sup>th</sup> Street is the main preservation goal – which will include cleaning the polychrome panels and revealing the original writing. The storefront openings have been altered and added to over the years. While historic photos of the original façade have not been found, the proposed façade design frames out the three storefront openings in a manner that is compatible in scale and proportion for this commercial building.

Establishing a three-story masonry base helps ground the building and creates a compatible datum with the adjacent historic properties that relates in height, scale, and massing. A very minor setback might be beneficial in helping highlight the retained façade and the design of the two new floors should continue to be developed in a manner that finds the right balance between relating to and remaining subtly differentiated from the original building.

The overall height of the new construction is similar to other development projects on this square and is not incompatible for the historic district. In bringing the metal and glass vocabulary down into the slot at 923 5<sup>th</sup> Street, the composition remains largely remote from the streetscape while also grounded to the street. The shifting of the mass of the tower at two floor intervals helps break down the mass and create a more relatable scale along this small-scale street. The angular facade has a sculptural quality that is distinct from the overused glass box vocabulary prevalent in too much new construction. As the design continues to be developed, it is recommended that the extent of clear glass used be evaluated to ensure that the building has a residential scale and character.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept generally consistent with the preservation act and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.*